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Social Dramas of  
Sudermann & Ibsen

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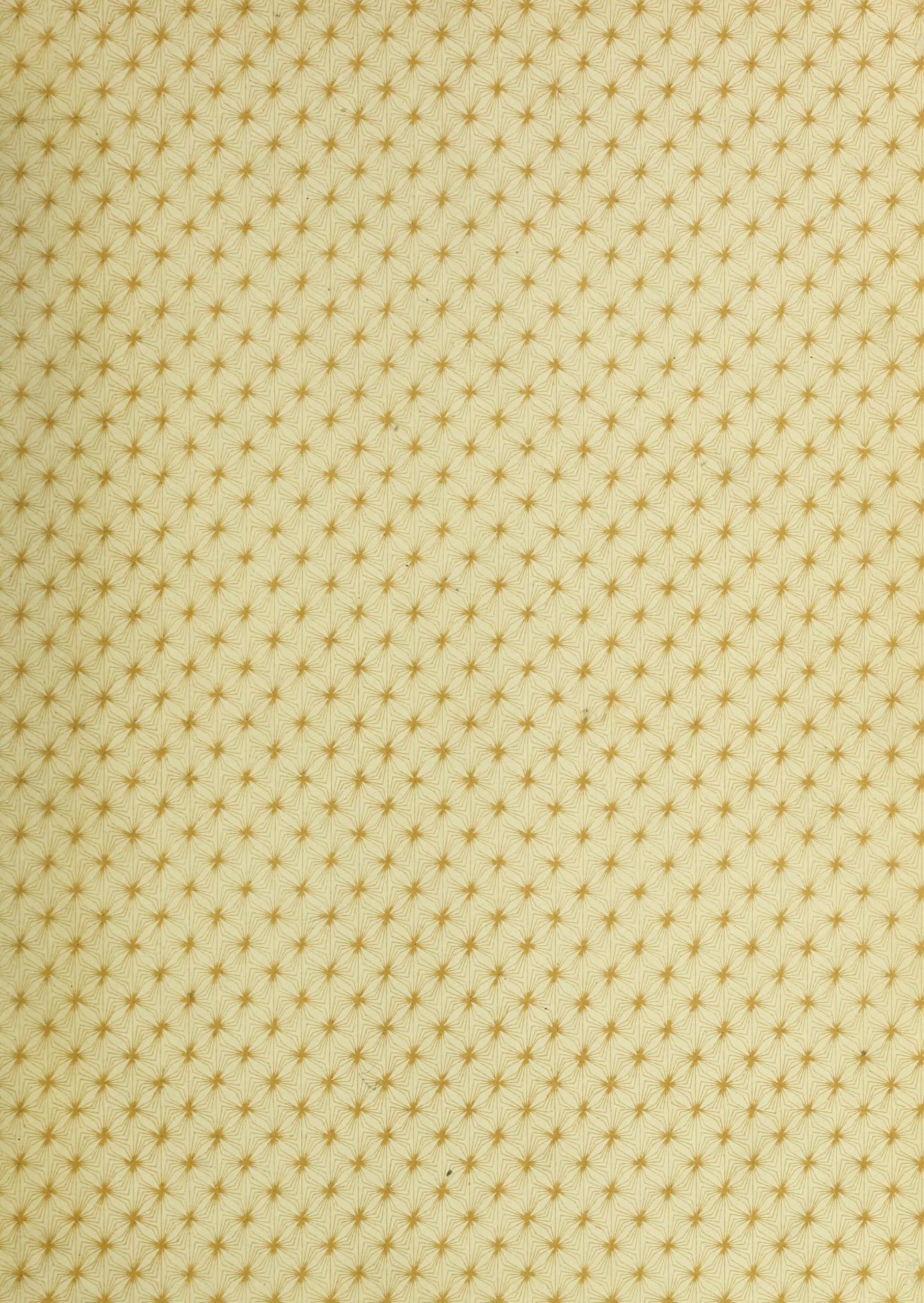
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The Social Dramas of Sudermann  
compared with those of  
Ibsen.

by  
Blenda Olson

Thesis for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts  
in German

in the  
College of Literature and Arts  
of the  
University of Illinois.

1905.



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

May 26, 1905.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY

BLENDY OLSON

ENTITLED THE SOCIAL DRAMAS OF SUDERMANN COMPARED WITH  
THOSE OF IBSEN.

IS APPROVED BY ME AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF Bachelor of Arts

*N. C. Brooks.*

Acting HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF German.

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## Introduction.

It is not our purpose in this comparison to treat the social dramas of Sudermann and Ibsen from every point of view, but to confine ourselves, as far as possible, to their treatment of the various relations of men and women to each other. The books we have studied with this end in view are as follows:

Sudermann  
Das Glück im Winkel.  
Heimat.  
The Joy of Living.  
Die Ehre.  
Sodoms Ende.  
Schmetterlingschlacht.

Ibsen  
Peer Gynt.  
The Lady of the Sea.  
Rosmersholm.  
Ghosts.  
The Pillars of Society.  
Little Eyolf.  
A Doll's House.



In the atmosphere of all the above dramas the dictators show a general discontent with existing relations between men and women and their attitude towards, the social laws which check their natural impulses, and tend to control their actions. It is a discontent with the so-called respectable members of society, for the most part, and not with its dregs. In our class this shows various types of individual. From the highest even to the lowest. Men and women are all with reason for various reasons they take view, but whose better qualities they are not loth to depict.

The characters that are presented to us in these dramas are confronted with certain troubles, moral, ethical or social, which they are called upon to consider. Social revolutions interfere with their hobbies and often with their greatest possibilities, and this because of



some previous mistake, or in  
which they may lay its gravity.  
sometimes such situations may arise  
because of certain circumstances  
which have brought about a social con-  
ditions the result needs to be adju-  
mental in order to work for the  
common good of all. Now, for the  
two authors agree as to what these  
problems are, and the methods of  
various types of human beings in  
dealing with them, as well as their  
exact psychological character, we shall see  
in what follows.

### *Das Glück im Kinkel.*

"Das Glück im Kinkel" and "The  
lady from the sea" have for their  
setting, as out of the way place where  
a professional man of practice in  
ferious abilities lives with his second  
wife and the children of his first.

The happiness in each of these homes  
is disturbed because the wife has  
not yet learned to adapt herself  
to her present environment. The



is still affected by experiences which  
she has had - though now in marriage  
and her husband fails to give her  
natural surroundings for interest-  
ing companionship. Very astir, the  
unraveling of the knot does the begin-  
ning, takes form as a force in her life.  
Peculiar in in its party of aims.

in each play the former power  
of the wife returns, and before he  
leaves, makes it necessary for her  
to choose between himself and her  
husband. she has not yet weaker-  
ened his influence over her and as long  
as she feels herself bound to her present  
condition, she struggles and longs  
to be freed from it. The husband, fore-  
seeing that it would be vain to try to  
force her to remain, gives her full liber-  
ty to leave. on the few occasions which  
follow this formal permission, a new  
light seems to break upon her. "Wir  
sind als ob sie nie diesen heut' zum  
ersten mal," says Egger in "Du  
Glück in Kunkel. "so tenderly have  
you come to love me" says Elida



in *The Lady from the sea*, and  
have been blind to it. "They won't let  
me have their freedom they are con-  
tent to stay."

This is perhaps the most striking  
parallel which can be formed in  
the works of the two authors. "So far  
she seems to be pit meekly the long-  
ing of a woman for freedom, the  
great difficulty in choosing the best  
course of action as long as she is  
bound by social conventionalities  
or by other circumstances to a  
contaminated course."

So far as we have traced the com-  
parison of the *Blolo*, *Underwear*  
seems to have presented his problem  
in an equally forcible way, to that  
of *Atsenu*. The former, to be sure, has  
softened his subject in a somewhat  
and less political and fanciful part.  
As a finished product, it is less a  
work of art than that of *Atsenu*.  
In its force of presentation, however,  
it is equally strong and he has  
created more pleasing characters.



though not so imaginative, in  
Widman, Rocknitz and, Elizabeth  
than either Haugel, the stranger, or  
Ellida. It is perhaps in the plot that  
Asen tows Vajode & into marriage in  
the mastery of his presentation. en-  
durance uses the incident of  
Helens engagement to Haugel briefly  
to throw light upon the character  
of Cigarette, and as an incident  
to further the main plot. Asen,  
on the other hand, shows in Sollets  
story, another, phase of the inquiry  
of woman for a broader and  
more wide world, and an  
eagerness to make the family which  
comes her to her present home.

He shows the course of the inquiry  
in the consciousness of the fact that  
was too much occupied with his  
noise to look after the needs of his  
children, and this now it results  
in Sollets decision to marry a man  
for whom she has no love, merely  
that she may satisfy her feelings  
and not be forever tied up in those



narrow bounds of her home. Then he leaves us to imagine her fate, which we feel can not be other than a repetition of her longing for freedom, in a more intense way than that which we have seen. Thus, because parents fail in their duties towards their children, the latter are left to make mistakes which will be of life long consequence to them.

### Hennat.

The failure of the father in his duty towards his daughter, and, indeed, too, has not been thin. In his play "Hennat" he shows Magda, a young girl, thrust out by her parents upon the world, and left to work out her own destiny. Here it is not, as in the former play, in carelessness of the father that is at fault; but his mistake as to what is his duty, a mistake, for which he later says with a broken heart in death. Magda refuses to obey his injunctions to marry Kettendijk and for what reason she is thrust



away from her home "Cui junges  
ahnungloses Duig war ich" she  
says of herself. "Das sind Freiheit  
genug wie kein losgelassener Ahe".  
This "Freiheit" overcomes her and she  
finds herself a fallen woman, friend-  
less among strangers. Twelve years  
later she returns to what was once her  
home, a famous singer to whom  
princs and nobles paid by tribute.

Now she is a woman of the world  
and has treated the air of freedom  
as long as it is narrow and as  
her father home, where she is a  
welcome guest, are too narrow and  
its prudential atmosphere too oppres-  
sive. She wishes at once to go away  
again, but Herterding, the doctor  
who had saved her life whom she  
had refused to marry, seeing the  
danger to the health of the father  
if she should go so soon, persuades  
her to remain a few days. The in-  
fluence of his fine, robust, vir-  
tue and gentle soul upon the world-  
ly Magda is like the warm sunshine



upon a frozen sea, which melts its  
rigid body until it responds to  
every whispering wind that passes  
over its surface and makes possi-  
ble the awful storm and ship-  
wreck. To be thus moved from her  
course, is a comparative insignifi-  
cant though true and noble man-  
is to her a noble sacrifice, is a  
great victory for the poor young lar-  
sow.

A similar effect is made by man-  
ders the Parson to "short" notes to  
persuade Mrs. Blamey to go back to  
her dissipated husband. Had neither  
Mayes nor Mr. Elving headed off  
good and well meant advice at the par-  
son. — It is truly wretched to  
see a "decent" and "short" could  
not hold her. Her father would  
not have learned of Mayes his lost in-  
nocence and died, broken hearted be-  
cause of it; and would not have  
done what he would to suffer  
in consequence of it further on.



## The Joy of Living.

We come now to another phase of the problem concerning the relations between men and women, between husbands and wives. In *Leopoldine* "The Joy of Living" and in *Leopoldine's Holiday* and *Lille Egypt* we find that husbands enjoy with their wives in married relations with each enjoy. an intellectual companionship of a woman, not his wife. This woman, arouses in her that is in him and urges him on to a life of usefulness. The wife meanwhile has little power over him except that given her by social laws and customs against which the other woman is a revolution. Realizing her lack of an wife and son over her husband, *Lila* (Lille Egypt) is constantly anxious to the neglect of her husband that takes no attention any other but, even to her own wife. Leopoldine, joy of living, around her, his visitant of social pleasures, and *Leopoldine* roomers



honor) throws herself, in despair into the milrace. The women who have thus disturbed the happiness of these homes are the ones with whom the authors most concern themselves.

Richard and Beata, who are giving themselves over for a long time to their passions, have now for twelve years enjoyed a close and constant friendship, pure in the eyes of the law, thoughts prompted by the ardent love of each for the other. They have so far as possible, avoided (it is known) Beata's husband, as a third member in that friendship, but he is ignorant of the true relation between his wife and Richard. Then at last the truth is revealed and the disaster comes to an end. Beata gives up the joy of young which has given all of life to her, and ends the stringing by taking poison. Thus she saves her honor to complete the work in Parliament, the work for which both have labored and planned so long and which is to mark a great



slip in his life of usual activity.

Tom Pomeroy, the new, is not, however, and his wife as a friend to the latter, and wife like, so I said, and were it not for such a wife, as Beata's former conduct was <sup>own</sup> inexplicable, become a great and useful man. She loves him and is eager to become a factor in his life for developing his best qualities. Then she sets herself about to rid herself of Beata, so gradually making her wife ~~herself~~ a kind of slave to him. Little by little she gains influence over him, until at last making his wife ~~that~~ she, Rebecca, is soon to be the mother of Pomeroy's child, she drives the unsuspecting Beata into the mill race. However, the meantime is wholly ignorant of what is taking place, and he does not realize <sup>not</sup> that his friend is for Rebecca in love and in secret. I saw that Pomeroy would take in on that and thought it worth writing his fellow men. In his unconscious burliness and nobility of mind, he influ-



ences Rebecca to run away & that  
she is no longer able to pursue the goal  
for which she has striven. She would  
never wish to run away all the time  
and she wishes to be free & would like  
to tell the exterior that she is unable to ac-  
cept his hand when he offers it. He  
now begins to see what it is in relation  
to himself that was love, though he did  
not recognize it, and feels as guilty as  
ever & his intuition had been right.  
"And now, has been a continual mat-  
terial," he says, "trouble from the very  
first. That is why there is guilt on  
my soul. I had no right to such an o-  
pinion. I was a child as you. I  
can never understand it but when  
makes life so marvellously sweet to  
live. — Peaceful happy innocence. With  
this his great aspirations leave him  
and he feels that he cannot carry on  
the work he started to do. Rebecca, in  
her desire to prove to him how her  
love has become purified and en-  
nobled through her disconnection with  
him, decides to go the way that Brata



went, and Rosmers feeling that nothing  
now left him now but death, over  
won his way into the mill race.

In this Egypt, it is the supposed  
sister of Anna whose exact position in  
the church is a little less clear than of her  
wife. They are good, together until  
early youth, when they were left orphans.  
Borghesm's love for the brother was a  
beautiful thing always. Now he is  
married to a wealthy woman and  
can pursue his work upon a book  
he is writing. He and Rosmer still  
knows each other, so much so, that  
Rita, the wife, sometimes feels jealous  
of her. By and by it is discovered by  
Rosmer and Anna that Anna is not  
brother as originally as any how sus-  
pected; and since the realization of what  
might have been, has not been  
thus married, comes over to her. At  
first Rita refuses to marry her - as  
(Borghesm who has come to her). He has  
a position far in the north, and as  
best as to come out, him and his  
"working companion". "Perhaps it



is best that you do not have a trou-  
bling companion as yet" Almers tells  
Hedda. "Because you never can know  
where you might possibly meet as-  
trayards - it's right travelling alone  
Someday when it is too late - too late."

Asta, foreseeing this demand of remain-  
ing longer, writes to youth now to tell  
when she decided to leave the home of  
Pöcknitz, decides, at the last moment  
to go with Borgesjö. Surprised at  
her sudden change, Almers exclaims  
"This is like a fight;" and Asta re-  
plies: "Yes, Alfred, it is a fight too, a  
fight from you, and I do it myself."

If we were to see Almers visiting  
Asta's home a little later, how easily  
we could imagine another scene  
similar to "Das Biest im Kästchen".

In the above plays we see how  
those who are drawn together by  
natural affinity are hindered be-  
cause they have come together too  
late. Social law and order binds  
them to unnatural and undesir-  
able relations which tend to ob-



struct their best development and usefulness. Only where there is more in social regulations do they show the real power latent within them; and yet the necessity of submission to social law is evident. The count and Beata (former are in sections whom social law cannot protect because in these special cases, it is in opposition to natural law.

What we say, then, is that under-mann and Coee would decay social law and order, since it is by their such bad results arising, because of them? Do they protect Beata, Rebecca and Elizabeth in their "Laternsinge"? To be sure, they are not responsible for having met too late; and since their natural family for each other cannot make or bear unfidelity, they cannot be blamed for that. One may marry a person whom he thinks he loves and later when the right man comes, find his mistake. But it is evident by all the plays



on the subject of both authors find "true happiness cannot be obtained by a career or social social career under such circumstances. It is the realization of this fact which brings about such evident restraint on the part of those in the upper classes who are thus disappointed. This is also evident in the bias of the two authors that marriages resulting in marriage are often due to the fact that people do not marry from the highest motives. In a marriage, besides, it is not the merit to surpass his literary acquirements. Solitude which might obtain a broader experience and knowledge of the world, and many others married for various similar reasons. Elizabeth had really no right to marry Wickham when her every thought (and dream) was of Wickham. Social regulations and shirddeterrent examples exist to prevent such marriages. In order to do so, society must deal harshly with those who defy them by act-



ing in opposition to a natural law,  
a law which says a man and a woman  
shall marry because they love each  
other.

### Die Ehre.

In "Die Ehre" the story of Anna  
comprises in a way with that of  
Anna in "Ghosts". Both girls are  
lead astray by a man from the  
upper classes and are given some  
money as recompense. Neither is  
broken hearted because of her love of  
the man, but Anna turns around  
and marries just as fast - and  
Anna, though she also loves  
Kurt, considers that you would not  
be very sad if hurt if she should lose  
him. This midnight comes to re-  
compense the damage done by Kurt  
to the family of Helene - the latter  
accepts it gladly. But next day -  
friend when Anna offers him  
the money she had got the room  
her father, says "I would never  
mention it to you if it. That man  
now, what's the wages of sin. x5



Johanna and I, we agreed that  
that money should go to the child's  
education, and so it did; and a full  
account for every penny of it. Thus  
we see in absent treatment of Eng-  
strand a higher conception of the  
common folk than is expressed in  
Ludwigsburg in the family of Heine-  
cke, where not a single working fam-  
ily is shown in the one first  
Report, who really no longer belongs  
to them. We see however in Note to  
the possibility of growth and de-  
velopment where advantages are at  
hand; for these tools, such I mean  
perhaps, does not consider possible  
for the poor, no in Regnitz, an off-  
spring of poverty and in an inhabi-  
tation of higher families as in  
Heindorf, although her advantages  
were as good as those of Pötest.

The first in memory of some re-  
flective attitude of the woman a-  
gainst her exclusion from the ma-  
tural and responsibilities of the  
household affairs, what is shown



by Nora of the Dolls House. We see also the same ability to stand out against those who thus attempt to exclude her, when her time for action comes. The other authors agree that women should not be treated as children, but as individuals having their share and responsibility in the progress of the world about them. As soon as Ollida was given the responsibility and the liberty of going with the stranger, she was able to decide at once what the best course for action.

### Sodoms Ende.

The most shocking of Sudermann's dramas, and one that bears little resemblance to the dramas of "Cleopatra" is "Sodoms Ende". It revolves about the character of Willi Markow, a young artist of genius, and shows how a wicked woman and weaker character and ultimate destruction is imminent future prospect. He shows, perhaps, the lack of restraint in the temperament of the genius, and



his weakness in resisting temptation. He is a great favorite with those about him, especially with the women and therefore his temptations are greater. The same characteristics can be traced in the wild escapades of Our Gynt who also bears the marks of a genius. Both lack force of character, are irresistible to all the women they meet, and yield to their weak natures, dragging one after another with them to destruction. When Peety at another time has come up the mountain with his neighbors wife she exclaims in desperation "Would that he might fall and, -". Then she screams in terror, "Take care of your footing, Our!"

In a like manner comes in a madly scene, Häremis lover, when he fears of his wife's running about the room exclaiming "Ne Häfe! 'ne Häfe!" and seizing a clout from the wall is about to strike her when the toy falls



over as if dead. Forgetting his anger  
he at once seeks to prove his.

Johannine.

In Johannine we find Marikka, a Lithuanian foundling, reared in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Vogelreuter, under whose parental care she has grown to womanhood. To show her appreciation of her home she makes herself so helpful and kind about the house, that she is a daily blessing to her benefactors. George von Hostig, a nephew of Vogelreuter, also lives in the family, and as he grows up, he learns to love Marikka. Because of her birth she dare not believe in the sincerity of George's love. She misinterprets his attentions, and though she loves him discourages all his advances. He considers himself rejected, and later wins the young daughter of the house Frieda, who will have with all the ardor of a virgin a first love. Marikka, while thus is preparing the new home for the prospective



bride, finds a note book from which she learns of the real love of Georg for herself. In the evening of the "anniversary" she has found together and recites their love to each other, but decides to bear it in silence as her only care. Their duty towards their wives has strengthened their marriage. It is necessary that they remain in their feelings. Before she had been aware, however, she had withdrawn from each other's arms and he is leaving his sonorous "Du, duu mir nicht" she says, "Ich will dich küssen. Ich will alles aus mir nehmen. Mein Mutter stand. Ich stell auch." Thus she shows as does Pequod how the moral tendencies of parents have an influence upon the children. Another example shows how in a bit of formal training and her dress out effort to be effective on other children, she out cast mother's desire. At a young impression it was thought that she would be forced to leave it now and away with her mother's union.



just before the wedding - to tell him. George however is unable to bring up his  
objection to his love - and demands  
release from his engagement. Here  
Marieka's better self is asserted. She  
is the first to see that his present  
times of anxiety would be selfish  
and not lasting. So they decide to  
say farewell forever. Here we are  
again reminded of Fred and  
Pita, and we are obliged to see  
in George marriage, a situation  
similar to that of Pita and al-  
fred.

The relations between Marieka  
and the young minister Hodge  
are similar to those of Magda and  
Hoffstetter, or of Madeline in  
"Isolé" and Paul's mother. Hodge  
is a character of good tone, per-  
sonal charm to others but he is beauty-  
and even in his ideals, and we  
see in the first devotion to Marieka.  
When he finds that she is sent to  
him, he asks her no embarrassing  
questions, but seeks to dissuade



her from doing wrong for her own  
sake. when she "he says to her" mein  
Lebensglück das hast du mir brüte  
zu schänden gemacht. aber meine zu-  
fensmeide die können du mir  
nicht nehmen. aber Heinrichen.  
heutes Heinrichen wenn du dies haust  
denn du alles auf dem welt ver-  
danken wenn du das mit Kun-  
meyer füllen. wenn du sich an  
ihrem Vater und Mutter vermied  
gebi"- that indeed is what he cannot  
bear to have her do. because he  
will.

### Schmetterlingschlacht.

The last play we have to consider  
seems to have no parallel in Ibsen's  
works. It is a comedy based upon  
the vain and shallow ambitions of  
a poor family to attain social  
and wealth by means of the per-  
sonal charms of the daughter. It  
is a sort of a "jetz nich mich sepele".  
by means of marriage which under-  
mines satirizes in this play.

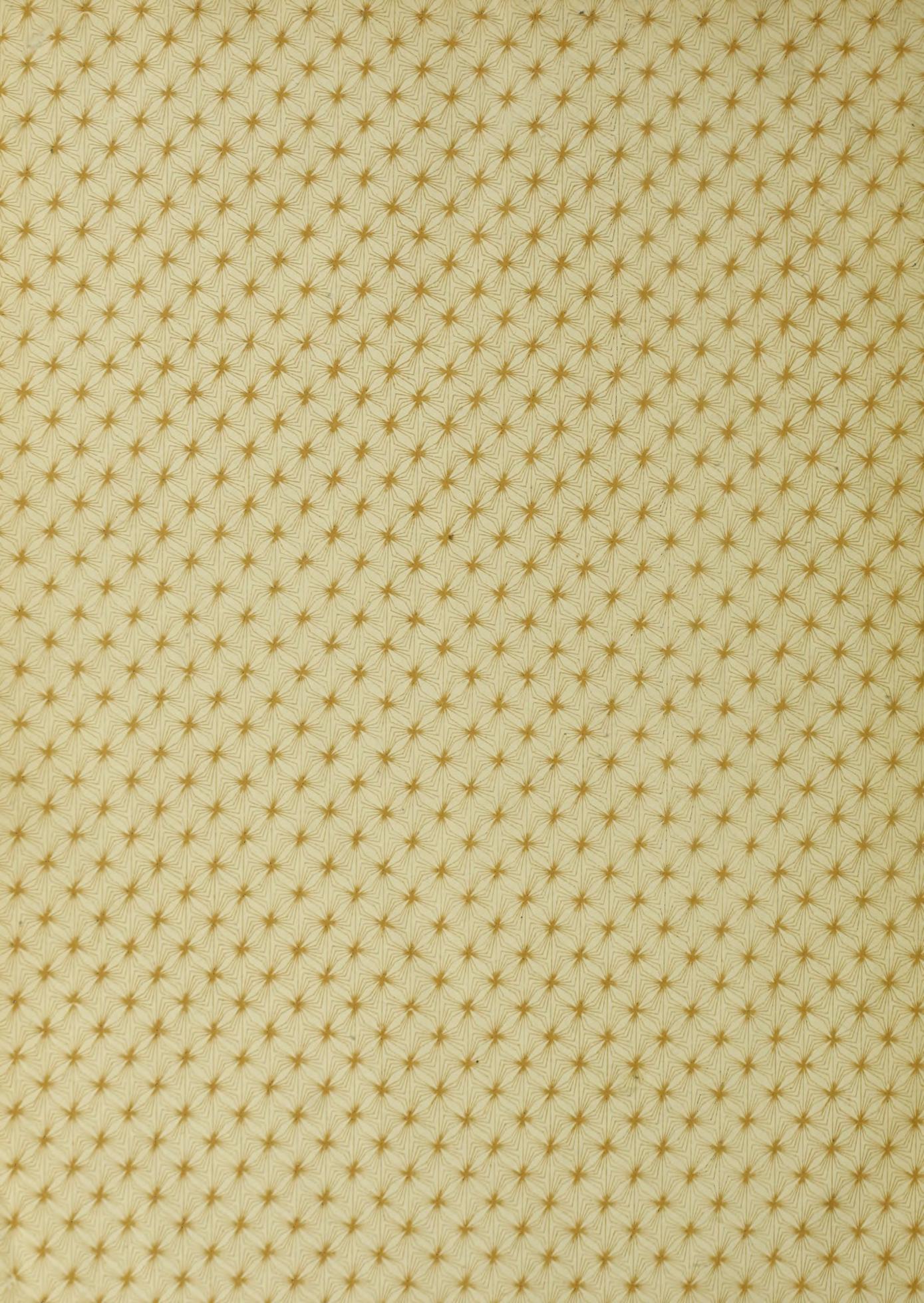
Frau Hergenhahn has three fair



descriptive signs, of whom one is anxious  
to make of it, a man of fortune.  
She has trifled and sacrificed  
more in order to give her daughters  
what they asked for some time, and  
now all are in perplexity as to  
the well known friends, for this  
marriage is popular where the whole  
family of it remains in a race  
ment, and it surely cannot be for  
her, for both the other girls are  
brides, and well known, and her  
the youngest, needs only a husband  
of accomplishment, for which he  
is absolutely known to her. She is  
an unselfish, young idealist who  
is not in the world of her own future  
but would rather be placed in another  
in this narrow of a victim.  
There she finds, as she wishes, with  
a and feels a love each other,  
she is so easily made, nor does she  
ever cease to be the same.  
That is to say, she is  
at one time become a queen, in  
the course of the day after before



she close he discovers her unworthiness, and gives her up. An affection soon grows up between Max and Rose which ends in the happy union of the two, the plans of the others having all been thwarted.





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